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| 1    5  10  15  20  25  30 | Dear Joe, The student I hired rang my bell at four yesterday afternoon and I went out to meet him at the gate. I gave him five hundred pounds for his week's work and he handed the bundle through the bars. Thirty-five photocopied articles by you. He went off happy, but what about me? I had no idea then what kind of night lay ahead. Perhaps they were the worst few hours of my life. It was torture, Joe, coming face to face with your sad dry thoughts. To think of the fools who paid you good money for them, and the innocent readers who had their day polluted by them!  I sat in the room my mother used to call the library, though the shelves were always pretty bare, and I read every last word, and actually heard them, in my head, spoken by you straight to me. I read each article as a letter sent by you into the future that was going to contain us both. What were you trying to do to me, I kept thinking. Hurt me? Insult me? Test me? I hated you for it, but I never forgot that I loved you too, and that was why I kept going. He needs my help, I told myself whenever I came close to giving up, he needs me to set him free from his little cage of reason. I had moments when I wondered if I had truly understood what God wanted from me. Was I to deliver into His hands the author of these hateful pieces against Him? Perhaps I was intended for something simpler and purer. I mean, I knew you wrote about science, and I was prepared to be baffled or bored, but I didn't know you wrote out of contempt.  You've probably forgotten the article you wrote four years ago for the New Scientist about the latest technological aids to biblical scholarship. Well, who cares about the carbon dating of the Turin Shroud? Do you think people changed their minds about their beliefs when they heard that it was a Medieval hoax? Do you think faith could depend upon a length of rotting cloth? But it was another piece that really shocked me, when you wrote about God Himself. Perhaps it was a joke, but that makes it even worse. You pretend to know what or who He is - a literary character, you say, like something out of a novel. |
| **Guiding Questions**  What is revealed about character through the tone of the extract?  How are the key ideas of the novel explored in this extract? | |